

**Delaware Department of Transportation
Phase IA Architectural Survey
Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), Water Street to Webbs Lane
Dover, Kent County, Delaware**

Introduction

McCormick, Taylor & Associates, Inc. (MTA) has been retained by the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to conduct preliminary cultural resources studies as part of planning activities for the Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), Water Street to Webbs Lane project which is located in the City of Dover, Kent County, Delaware (See Figure 1).

Work for the preliminary historic architectural assessment entailed identification of historic properties currently listed in the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (DE SHPO) Cultural Resource Survey (CRS) Inventory and properties that contain standing structures fifty-years or older within the anticipated Area of Potential Effect (APE) of the proposed construction project. A windshield survey of the project APE was also conducted to confirm the locations of the aforementioned properties.

Based on the results of the study and in consideration of the nature of the project, several critical cultural resources issues for this project have been identified. Currently, roughly 70 properties with standing structures fifty years old or older have been identified within the project APE. The locations of these identified resources are depicted on the attached mapping. Representative photographs of the project APE are also included. Because many of these properties have yet to be diagnosed or registered with the DE SHPO CRS Inventory, it is recognized that complete identification, and possibly evaluation studies, may be necessary to complete the Section 106 requirements for the project.

The Phase IA Survey was carried out in part to begin the Section 106 process and adhere to the instructions and intents of the National Historic Preservation Act; in accordance with the DE SHPO *Guidelines for Architectural and Archaeological Surveys in Delaware* and the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Historical Documentation*.

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See Figure 1

Background Research

General Overview

The resources reviewed for this project are situated along Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), between Water Street and Webbs Lane, in Dover, Delaware. The project area is situated in the Upper Peninsula Zone (Herman et al., 19). Dover, the state capital, is located in Kent County, the middle of Delaware's three counties.

Dover was founded by a directive from William Penn in 1683 and laid out in 1717, growing slowly thereafter. County activities were first held around courthouse square, also known as The Green. Outside this center of county government churches were constructed within a block of the town's center and farms were located just a short distance from this hub of activity. It was decided in 1777 by the General Assembly that Dover would become the state capital after a meeting was held there. At that time in the late 18th century, it was reported that Dover contained approximately 100 buildings, most of which were of brick construction. The four main streets of Dover intersected at The Green, where county and state offices were to be constructed (Hancock, 63-64).

Historic Contexts

Much of the historic settlement of Dover concentrated in what is today known as the Dover Green and Victorian Dover Historic Districts; historic maps of the region do depict several no longer extant structures, likely farms, along the peripheries of the city (See Figure 2). The farms of Dover and Kent County yielded crops such as peaches, apples, pears, and later wheat, corn, strawberries, and soybeans. The proliferation of the automobile and the resulting improved transportation routes throughout the state led to increased residential development at the periphery of urban centers such as Dover and the farms were soon thereafter subdivided.

Given the proximity of the 20th century development along Governors Avenue to the National Register Districts to the north, such as the Dover Green Historic District there is a sharp contrast between the pristine nature of the 18th century building stock in the District and the outlying suburban development. However, it is through this well-preserved governmental center with some religious and residential buildings from the founding of the state that a fairly clear picture of the development of the city unfolds through the surrounding 19th and 20th century architecture that built up around The Green and eventually extending along Governors Avenue. The project area is most likely to contain building stock from the *Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880 to 1940* +/- context developed in the *Historic Context Master Reference and Summary* as well as the *Delaware Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* (Herman, et al., 35 and Ames et al., 84).

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Insert Figure 2

Applicable Contexts and Property Types in Project Area

According to the *Historic Context Master Reference and Summary*, properties within the project area are situated within the Upper Peninsula Zone and fall within the context of *Urbanization and Early Suburbanization, 1880 to 1940 +/-*. It is stated: "The greatest architectural growth occurred around the edges of most towns in the form of extended residential neighborhoods in an early suburban pattern. Suburbs were most notable around Milford, Dover, Smyrna, Middletown, and south Wilmington (Urban Zone)" (Herman et al., 34). It goes on to note: "Survival rates for property types in this time period are most notable in and around urban and suburban communities" (ibid). An economic trend pointed out in the *Historic Context Master Reference and Summary* that is applicable to this immediate study area is the rural social movement, the Grange (Herman et al, 36). There is a grange hall along the east side of Governors Avenue that was constructed c. 1950. Examples of property types for the theme of *Urbanization and Early Suburbanization 1880 to 1940 +/-* include bungalows and suburban tract housing, which are the dominant residential styles along Governors Avenue in Dover (Herman et al, 37).

Settlement Patterns and Demographic Change

The residential community that sprung up around Dover along South Governors Avenue contains a building stock that ranges between c. 1920-1950. Suburbanization is a phenomenon that began in the late 19th century as people sought places to live that were lower density than cities. Suburban development and transportation became closely connected ideas. In order for suburbs to proliferate there had to be a reliable means of transportation, be it by rail, streetcar, or later automobile that could get people from their residences to the city for work (Lanier and Herman, 252). The outlying areas of Dover are a good example of this automobile related and dependent development.

Unlike modern suburbs with their curvilinear streets, early suburbs, such as the development along Governors Avenue (particularly between Waples and Wyoming Avenues), were laid out in a miniature grid (Lanier and Herman, 254). The housing stock varies within a narrow range of stylistic characteristics within this particular community. Their overall shape and form are similar but details have been changed in order to differentiate between the houses.

Concurrent with the suburbanization of Governors Avenue came commercialization of the area. Many of the commercial structures are interspersed among residential developments between Water Street and Webbs Lane along Governors Avenue. Most of the commercial buildings have similar stylistic characteristics, minimal architectural detail and were constructed of concrete block from c. 1930-1950. Both commercial and residential developments continue to the present.

Architecture

The architecture of central Delaware is a blend of traditions from the outlying areas. House plan types most often resemble those found in the north, particularly in southeastern Pennsylvania; however, there is a strong influence from Delaware's southern regions, including the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. Brick construction was more popular in the central region of Delaware than any other part of the state. As the construction of frame building techniques improved the building stock gradually shifted in that direction by the latter part of the 19th century (Lanier and Herman, 15-16). During the 20th century and the proliferation of suburban development housing stock in the state shifted to smaller, and simplified versions of earlier architectural styles. The first half of the century saw various stages of buildings constructed easily by improved techniques, prefabrication, and new materials that resulted in an economy of scale with residential buildings of the Craftsman and Minimal Traditional styles being the most widely seen.

Methodology

Objective

The objective of the Phase IA Survey is to determine the preliminary Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), Water Street to Webbs Lane project and identify architectural resources therein.

Methods

Cursory searches of primary and secondary sources were consulted to gain an overall picture of the development and history of the City of Dover, Kent County, Delaware, and specifically the Governors Avenue corridor. Research was also conducted at the Delaware State Historic Preservation Office, which included a search of the CRS Inventory and National Register of Historic Places files. Background research revealed several cultural resources within the immediate vicinity of the Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), Water Street to Webbs Lane project areas that have been recorded with the DE SHPO. A windshield and pedestrian survey of architectural resources fifty years old or older within the proposed project area identified approximately 70 standing structures immediately visible within the APE. In the field, the type, style, and condition of each structure were noted. Based on visual appearance an approximated date of construction was determined. Representative color 35mm photographs of the project APE were taken to illustrate the various types and styles of structures in the area.

Future Action

Although most of the previously recorded cultural resources in the general area have since been subjected to evaluation studies, others, such as K-1012 have not. Moreover, it must be noted that much of the project area has not been subjected to formal cultural resources evaluation studies.

Many of the properties identified as fifty years old or older have yet to be diagnosed or registered with the DE SHPO CRS Inventory, it is recognized that complete identification, and possibly evaluation studies, may be necessary to complete the Section 106 requirements for the project.

Based on the results of the background search, reconnaissance survey, and consultation with DelDOT and the DE SHPO, it is recommended that a Phase IB (Location/Identification Level) and Phase II (Evaluation Level) Survey and the necessary documentation that accompanies these studies be completed for key cultural resources that have the potential to be impacted by the Governors Avenue (U.S. 13 Alternate), Water Street to Webbs Lane project, as identified in the field by qualified professionals from the DE SHPO and MTA. It is recommended that a comprehensive study of primary and secondary resources be completed which would include a context about the suburbanization of Dover in order to fully understand the development of the Governors Avenue corridor.

Previously Identified Resources

A search of the DE SHPO CRS Inventory and National Register of Historic Places files revealed that four (4) resources have previously been identified within the project area (See Figure 3). K-6464, a c. 1929 bridge over Puncheon Run (See Photo 17), K-6725, a c. 1923 four-square house at the corner of northwest corner of Webbs Lane and Governors Avenue, and K-1011, a c. 1920s Dutch Colonial Revival house between Governors Avenue and Route 13 have all been determined ineligible by the DE SHPO. K-1012, a c. 1930 concrete building between Governors Avenue and Route 13 has not had a formal determination from the DE SHPO. At the northern project limit lays the Dover Green Historic District, a National Register District.

Architectural Resources

A field view of the proposed project area was conducted with representative from DelDOT, DE SHPO, and MTA on August 20, 2001. At which time the following resources were discussed in depth as key cultural resources in need of evaluation.

Two extant structures from the late 19th century are situated on the west side of Governors Avenue, north of Fiddlers Green. Based on sight evaluations in the field and architectural details, it appears that these structures date to c. 1880. Both exhibit features that are common in the Gothic Revival style, particularly the windows featured in the prominent gables of each house. Photos 22 and 24 show that one house has a pointed arch window in the gable and the other features a tripartite window.

One residential resource slated as a potential acquisition because of its close proximity to Governors Avenue is a garage (See Photo 30) associated with a c. 1930 house that faces U.S. Route 13. The house has two stories with a side gabled roof and the garage has vertical board siding and a new door.

Two commercial buildings have also been identified as potential acquisitions. One is situated at the southwest corner of Governors and Wyoming Avenue and is a c. 1950s one story concrete block structure with large plate glass windows (See Photo 11). This building is also situated on the same parcel as a c. 1925 two-story side gable roofed residence with Colonial Revival detailing which will need evaluation. The other commercial building is situated within the boundary of the Dover Green Historic District, however, at the time of the District's listing this structure was not identified as a contributing or non-contributing. Pictured in Photo 46, this c. 1935 one story commercial building would need to be evaluated for its contribution to the Dover Green Historic District and for its individual eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A potential historic district was identified during field investigations and discussed during the agency field view. Photos 5-10 are representative photographs of the types of residences situated between Waples and Wyoming Avenues on the west side of

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Governors Avenue. Most appear to have been constructed between c. 1925-1930 and one or one and a half story structures with Minimal Traditional architectural form and details. It was discussed that the potential district might extend along Wyoming Avenue to the east and west of Governors Avenue pending further investigation. This residential area is typical of the other domestic architecture of the area, however, this area between Waples and Wyoming Avenues is a particularly concentrated area. Other domestic architectural styles include Colonial Revival, Craftsman or bungalow style, other modest four square styles all seen the accompanying photographs.

Most of the commercial buildings have similar stylistic characteristics, minimal architectural detail and were constructed of concrete block from c. 1930-1950. Largely they are one story, flat roofed, rectangular buildings.

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See Figure 3

Summary and Conclusion

The properties identified during field investigations illustrate the early to mid-20th century residential and commercial development of the capital city of Delaware and it is clear that construction in the latter part of the century, to the present has continued. This windshield and pedestrian study of the area revealed that many of the commercial buildings have been altered throughout the years, and whereas some of the dwellings have been converted from residential to commercial use they have only changed in function, not necessarily appearance. The residences that remain along the Governors Avenue corridor are all similar in material, shape, scale, and style. They are indicative of the architectural styles that proliferated prior to World War II and continued to be built after the War.

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